

Opening Day to Nov 17 Deer Check Office Reports

Upper Peninsula

Monica Joseph, Wildlife Biologist, Crystal Falls Field Office (Reporting for Crystal Falls, Marquette areas)

Temperatures ranged from 0-14 degrees in the west, snow levels range from 15 inches through Iron and Dickinson Counties and 40-50 inches in the Ironwood stretch and further up north. Snow conditions are powdery so there's no support, many forest roads are not plowed so hunters are struggling to get in, many are parking along roads and hiking in a short distance. Some hunters have chosen not to hunt due to these conditions. Deer have begun migrating and this has been advantageous for those who are near migration routes but those hunting on summer range will likely not be as successful. It's very cold but not windy. Hunters aren't staying out long due to the cold.

Body condition of the deer seen look very good. All checkstations appear to be down significantly likely due to the current conditions and low deer numbers. It does appear the rut is in full swing.

Kristie Sitar, Wildlife Biologist, Newberry Customer Service Center (Reporting for Sault Ste. Marie, Newberry and Shingleton)

Hunting conditions are clear and crisp with low teens for temperatures this morning but warming to mid 20's today with sunny conditions. No precipitation today and winds were moderate in most areas.

Snow ranges from 4-6 inches in southern Mackinac County to around a foot in the Sault and along M-28 to Newberry until you get into Schoolcraft County where it is about 2 feet in the Munising area. It is reported to be knee high at least in northern Luce County with many reports of deer migrating. The migratory activity is probably causing hunters in the right places to see more deer.

The body condition of the harvested deer was quite good and antler development was below average which is typical following a severe winter like we had last year. This follows suit with what we have seen here during archery season.

The hunter that I spoke with reported hearing very few shots and didn't see many hunters out. It was reported that hunters are out along M-28 though. Hunting pressure seemed light yesterday from what I saw across the EUP from the air.

Northern Lower Peninsula

Bruce Barlow, Wildlife Biologist, Gladwin Field Office (Reporting for Gladwin County)

Opening day conditions were ideal with temperatures in the low 20's and most of the county having good snow cover for seeing and if necessary, tracking deer. Hunter numbers in the Lake Duck and Gladwin Field Trial area appeared up from the last two years. Hunters reported hearing a number of

shots throughout both areas but none of those spoken to have harvested a deer yet, though many were seeing them. The Gladwin checkstation was up over 10% from last year and the deer coming through were very healthy looking with the bucks having good antler development and good body size.

Brian Piccolo, Wildlife Biologist, Roscommon Customer Service Center (Reporting for Gaylord, Atlanta and Mio)

Oscoda, Alcona, and Crawford Counties have up to 2 inches of fresh snow on the ground, conditions are somewhat windy, with temperatures in the low 20's. Hunters are reporting that they're not hearing many shots. Hunter numbers are very good. Deer check numbers are slightly down from last year.

Montmorency, Alpena and Presque Isle Counties: no snow on the ground. Activity is reported as being slow. Hunter numbers are good. One suspect Bovine Tuberculosis deer was brought in.

Gaylord, deer check numbers slightly down. Similar number of hunters, vehicles and shots heard to last year. The Gaylord area received 8 inches of fresh snow in the last few days.

Southwestern Lower Peninsula

Mark Sargent, Wildlife Supervisor (Reporting for the southern half of the Southwest region)

Areas in the southern half of the Southwestern regions had anywhere from a dusting of snow to areas of 2-6 inches of snow. Temperatures were in the mid-20's with light winds (~5 mph). Deer check numbers across the area are down in comparison with years past. Hunters are enjoying their time but are reporting fewer shots heard and hunter numbers seem down. Many hunters seeing a decent number of bucks and many reporting good numbers of deer overall. Good acorn production in woods so many hunters near these areas are reporting seeing a lot of deer. Deer condition looks very good. Both body size and antler development appear to be well developed.

John Niewoonder, Wildlife Supervisor (Reporting for Belding area)

Good hunter numbers, deer check numbers are slightly down. Hunters seeing decent numbers of deer and hearing decent number of shots. Overall it seems fairly similar to years past but perhaps down a bit. Conditions are cold which may be keeping some hunters out of the woods. Antler development seems poorer than usual, may reflect last year's winter conditions but it's really too early to tell.

Southeastern Lower Peninsula

Jeremiah Heise, Wildlife Biologist, St. Charles Field Office (Reporting for St. Charles area)

Pre-dawn saw temps hovering in the low 20s with the windchill (winds were ~5 mph out of the SW) and light but steady snow tapering off by 8 am. The day was mostly cloudy with temps staying in the low 20s. Winds increased to 10-12 mph out the SSW/SW.

The number of hunters seemed to be on par with prior years. While cold and with little activity (see below), hunters seemed to be in good spirits as they passed through.

Reports on deer sightings were varied with some hunters saying they saw an increase in buck numbers while others thought deer sightings were similar to slightly down from prior years. Deer activity was slow across the area. The region has upwards of 50% of corn still standing; opening day eve saw deer field feeding in daylight amongst active combining operations.

The St. Charles office checked 39 deer, compared to 42 from opening day 2013. The Bay City OSC checked 11 deer, identical to last year's opening day. All deer that came through the check station appeared to be in good condition. The oldest buck that came through the check station was 3.5 years old; the oldest doe was just 2.5.

There were no unusual/unique sightings from hunters or of deer that came through the check station.

Julie Oakes, Wildlife Biologist, Holly Field Office (Reporting for Lapeer and Oakland County)

Cold conditions (22-25 degrees), light flurries with dusting of snow on the ground. Temperatures warmed to 32 and snow was gone by mid-morning. Bow season thus far has been fairly slow so that may be an indicator for how firearm may go. Doesn't seem as though there are as many hunters in the woods as normal. Those hunters that are out have reported not hearing many shots. So far hunters don't appear to be seeing many deer though hunters think deer numbers are good from what they've seen prior to the season beginning. Most of the corn is still up (at least 80% still up) so this will make for more difficult hunting conditions.

Mike Parker, Private Lands Coordinator (Reporting for Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee Counties)

Great hunting conditions, light snow, no wind, mid-20's temperatures. Hunters were reporting not hearing as many shots as usual nor seeing as many deer. This may be largely due to the fact that 75-80% of corn is still up in these areas. This will make for a more challenging hunt but in general hunters appeared to be in good spirits and were simply enjoying being out.

November 16th Deer Check Reports

Upper Peninsula

Colter Lubben, Technician, Escanaba Customer Service Center (Reporting for Delta, Dickinson and Menominee areas)

Weather conditions:

- 3"-5" snow
- very cold mornings (10-20 degrees)
- Crunchy snow in the mornings
- Sunny and warmer afternoons (25-30 degrees)
- very little snow fall throughout the first two days of the season

Deer numbers:

- checked in 9 deer on the opener (Escanaba Field Office) (-42% ten year average)
- checked in 7 so far today (on pace to be one of the lowest numbers of deer checked in over the first two years here in Escanaba)
- majority of hunters saying "it is one of the worst seasons we have ever had"
- hunters are reporting that the number of shots heard is half of what they usually are.
- very few 1.5 yr olds being checked in

Antler development:

- poor antler development on the majority of deer being checked in.
- multiple sub-legal 2.5 yr olds.

Don Brown, Wildlife Technician, Shingleton (Reporting for Sault Ste. Marie, Newberry and Shingleton)

No deer have been checked in the Shingleton area and the Sault Ste. Marie Field Office on Saturday or Sunday. Twelve bucks were checked at the buck pole in Newberry and 3 so far at the Newberry Customer Service Center. Weather has been cold (temperatures in the low 20's) but it's a bit warmer today (high 20's). There is at least 2 feet of snow in the woods. Deer appear to be migrating and are holding up in the mid snow fall zone once they have gotten out of the high snow fall zone. Antler development looks to be about a year behind and very few 1.5 year old deer are being checked. Weather looks good for hunting but it's been slow despite this.

Northern Lower Peninsula

Steve Griffith, Wildlife Biologist, Traverse Field Office (Reporting for Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie, Kalkaska and Manistee Counties)

Weather conditions in Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie, Kalkaska and Manistee counties have been cold and snowy since early November. The area received 4-6 inches of snow on Sunday November 9th. Temps the week prior to the firearm opener were in the mid to low thirty's for highs and the teens and twenties at night, which slowly reduced the extent of snow cover. However, nearly the entire forest area received additional snow prior to the 15th creating good visibility in the woods and ideal tracking conditions. Snow depths range from about two to six inches. Winds have been light and skies mostly overcast with scattered flurries.

Hunter numbers appeared to be up a little bit from recent years, possibly because of the Saturday opener. Deer camps and scouting activity on large blocks of State land are close to last year's activity level. Public land hunters have reported low to moderate amounts of shots heard on opening day. Similar to last year, private land hunters have reported larger amounts of gun shots, but from localized blocks of land.

Most hunters are reporting seeing good numbers of deer. Although reports from the Sleeping Bear Dunes area have been that numbers in the National Park are down. For a third year in a row some

hunters, specifically in Grand Traverse County, are reporting seeing greater numbers of bucks versus does, compared to previous years. Rutting activity seemed to be at its peak right before Veteran's Day with most hunters that checked in deer saying they have seen bucks chasing and breeding does, as well as finding active scrapes.

In 2014, the Traverse City Check Station's two day Firearm total is 22 deer which is the same as in 2013, down about 40% from the 2012 Firearm two day total. Cold temperatures have alleviated the necessity to quickly process deer and hunters are able to hold onto deer longer before checking their animals. This is the first year since 2008 that the Kalkaska Check Station has been open. Kalkaska's two day firearm total is 16 deer, compared to 26 deer in 2008. Very likely some hunters have not discovered that the Kalkaska station has reopened.

Many corn fields are still standing or have only recently been harvested due to plenty of rain. Acorn crops have been excellent this year as well as apples, domestic and wild. Many other soft and hard mast crops also had high yields for a second year in a row. Antler development seems a little variable this year, possibly due to the longer more severe winter of 2013/2014. However, we have checked several very nice public land bucks that made it into the 2 year and above age classes.

This is the second year of area wide Antler Point Restrictions. The October 1st through November 14th archery buck take has shown a declining trend in the number of 1.5 year old bucks harvested, and as predicted an increasing trend in the number of two and three year old bucks harvested.

Mark Monroe, Wildlife Technician, Gaylord Customer Service Center (Reporting for Gaylord Checkstation)

Temps have been between 20-30 degrees with about 6-8 inches of snow. Hunter numbers are comparable to last year. Hunters are seeing deer but it seems like movement is being impeded by the weather. Checkstation numbers are down about 10% but that may change since many people may head home tomorrow. Checking a lot of 2.5 year old bucks with poor antler development. Checked a 4.5 year old buck that was still in velvet.

Southwestern Lower Peninsula

Ken Kesson, Wildlife Biologist at Crane Pond (Reporting for the southern half of the Southwest region)

Conditions started off cloudy with winds from the SW at 5-10 mph. Temperatures have remained steady at 30 degrees with light snow starting at the end of the day. Hunter numbers seems down this year in comparison with years past. Twenty-nine deer were checked at the Crane Pond checkstation. Hunters seeing a decent number of deer but seem to think that deer numbers are a bit lower. Hunters noted seeing a number of bucks and good antler development. Good rutting activity. No unusual reports or unusual deer season. Hunter satisfaction seems good.

Chad Fedewa, Wildlife Biologist at Rose Lake (Reporting for Shiawassee and Ignam area)

Weather has been fairly cool with temps at mid- 20's at night and day temps in 30's. Light dusting of snow on Sunday morning. Hunters are noting how cold it's been and it seems to be affecting whether people head out to hunt and how long they are staying out to hunt. Checked 25 deer yesterday and 25 today which is down from the average but about the same as last year. General perception is that hunters aren't seeing as many deer but some hunters are hearing a lot of shots. Conditions are likely similar to last but temperatures are much colder this year. A lot of hunters seeing many younger bucks in the woods and the older bucks that are being checked have poorer antler development than in years past.

Southeastern Lower Peninsula

Don Bonnette, Wildlife Biologist (Reporting for Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac Counties)

Good deer hunting weather. Dusting of snow on the ground each day but melts by noon. Temps are in the upper 20's and maxed out in the 30's. It seems there are fewer hunters overall compared to previous years. Private land hunters seem to be lower this year but public land hunters are at about the same numbers as years past. There is still a lot of corn up in the area (about 40%) so many deer will stay in these areas. Deer condition looks very good, antler development on 1.5 year old bucks looks very good and older bucks are about average. Haven't checked many does yet but that's not uncommon this early in the season. Number of deer checked is down but this may be because hunters are letting their deer hang this year due to the cold temperatures (last year this couldn't happen since it was 65 degrees on opening day).

Kristin Bissell, Wildlife Biologist, Holly Field Office (Reporting from the Jerome Country Market)

Lots of hunters came through the checkstation today rather than opening day. Checked about 500 deer which is on par for last year. Hunters seem satisfied. Seeing older bucks at the checkstations rather than 1.5 year old bucks (most are 2.5 years old). Hunters are enjoying the cool weather. Many hunters seem to be hanging their deer longer this year so we may not check them for a while. Deer seen look very healthy.

November 17th Deer Check Reports

Upper Peninsula

John DePue, Wildlife Biologist, Baraga Field Office (Reporting for Baraga and Wakefield areas)

We have registered 25 deer in Baraga OSC and 6 at the Wakefield office. Conditions for hunters are very difficult. Most roads are snow covered with 2-3 feet of snow, getting into camps and blinds is difficult, ATVs are useless up here right now. That said, the deer are migrating and hunters that have found migration trails have been successful. Many of the bucks registered have been very nice 2-4 year old, 8 point bucks. Still snowing another 6-12 inches forecast for tonight.

Dave Jentoft, Wildlife Biologist, Sault Ste. Marie Field Office (Reporting for Sault Ste. Marie, Newberry and Shingleton)

Conditions continue to be similar at EUP check stations. Fewer deer have come into check stations compared to the same time last year. Of those deer checked, body conditions have generally been good. Antler development is lower than that seen in recent past years, and seems similar to what is typically seen on the next younger age class. For example, 2 ½ year old bucks have had antler development similar to that seen in a 1 ½ year old buck, and so on. Good hunting conditions have persisted in areas with lower snow loads, mainly in central areas and south. Temperatures have been in the low to mid-20s today with partly cloudy skies and gentle winds. Some areas have received snow, but other areas have not. For example, St. Ignace area received a lot of snow last night, but it was fairly localized. Northern areas, such as northern Luce County, continue to have high snow loads. Hunting pressure has been low compared to other years. Hunter attitudes seem ok given the circumstances, with many hunters understanding the impacts of the last two winters.

Northern Lower Peninsula

Erin Victory, Wildlife Biologist, Baldwin Field Office (Reporting for Lake, Mason, Wexford and Missaukee Counties)

Snow has been steadily falling for the past 2 days, leaving us with about 6 inches of snow on the ground. This has made for good tracking conditions; however, temperatures hovering around 20 degrees by mid-day today has made for some short stays in the woods for some hunters. The weather in general may have affected hunter numbers, as some folks were not willing or able to make long journeys or get access to deer camp given conditions. Check station numbers were unusually low all weekend, but picked up to near-normal today. Many folks said they were on their way back home. Hunter impressions of deer and hunter numbers were highly localized; some saw more deer and in particular more bucks than in years past, while others felt lucky to see the one they brought into the checkstation. Many of the bucks we did see come through from Lake County were impressive in antler size, compared to recent years. This is likely due to antler point restrictions, which required a minimum of 3 points on a side. All deer that came through the checkstation looked good in size and condition, with only a few exceptions. Though still early yet, results of this second year of antler point restrictions are becoming evident in the age distribution of bucks taken. Out of 61 deer checked so far this firearm season, 7% were 1 year olds, 69% were 2 year olds, and 17% were 3 year olds with the remaining 7% 4 years or older. Seventeen bucks could not be aged. As expected, harvest of 1 year olds is down.

Jennifer Kleitch, Wildlife Biologist, Gaylord Customer Service Center (Reporting for Alpena, Atlanta Posen and Onaway)

Alpena is down about 40%, Atlanta is down 10% and Onaway and Posen are about the same as last year in terms of the number of deer brought to checkstations. Hunters and Conservation Officers are reporting not seeing many hunters in the woods. In Alpena hunters aren't hearing many shots. All the stations have been seeing exceptional bucks with good body size and excellent antler development. Lots of 8 point bucks coming in. Hunters seem satisfied. Hunting conditions are cold and there is no snow on the ground over in Alpena. Corn is still up which could be affecting hunting in the area. Atlanta has about 1-2 inches of snow which should be good for tracking.

Southwestern Lower Peninsula

Mark Mills, Wildlife Biologist, Allegan State Game Area (Reporting for the southern half of the Southwest region)

Hunting conditions: mid-20's, west wind with 4-8 inches of snow on the ground in Allegan. Kalamazoo and Van Buren also have snow but not quite as much as Allegan County. Hunter numbers are low in comparison with years past and activity in the woods seems slow. Opening day we had 139 vehicles on the car count (we are generally over 200). This may be because there were no permits available or due to hunters wanting deer numbers to rebound in the area. Not many deer being seen in the woods by most hunters. Of the deer being seen hunters are reporting seeing more bucks than does. We've only checked 7 deer so far but the Allegan checkstation hasn't been open for 7 years so it may be slow because people don't know it's open. Antler development is not as good as years past. The cold weather seems to be keeping hunters either out of the woods entirely or only hunting for short periods of time.

Nik Kalejis, Wildlife Biologist, Muskegon state Game Area (Kent, Muskegon, Grand Rapids Area and southern Newaygo)

Heavy snow has been falling all day and 8 inches for the day are predicted. Hunter numbers down about 7% at Rogue River State Game area, the east unit of the Muskegon State Game Area was up 40%, hunter numbers around main part of game area are down. Hunters reporting not seeing many deer or hearing many shots. Private land hunters are reporting good numbers of deer. Checkstation numbers are down about 33%, though the West Walker checkstation aren't as low. Deer are in good condition and we are seeing a number of very healthy looking 2.5 and 3.5 year old bucks. Processors are reporting getting a good number of deer in. It was a slow opener for the area in comparison with other years and the weather has been pretty tough thus far for hunters. Corn in the area is still up in many areas with 40-50% of the corn is still up.

Southeastern Lower Peninsula

Zac Cooley, Wildlife Biologist, Monroe and Wayne Counties (Reporting from Cabelas Checkstation)

The weather has been very cold thus far. Traffic at deer checkstation here at Cabela's was light, with Sunday being the busiest day. So far, Monday has been very slow. Hunters are reporting seeing a lot of deer and seem pretty satisfied. Even though people are seeing a lot of deer they're saying it's very quiet in the woods and they're not hearing a lot of shots. The majority of deer that have been checked are being brought in from Jackson and Hillsdale counties. The local CO had no violations the first two days of the season which was a first for him, he was happy to report everyone he ran into was following the rules and were well versed in the laws.